



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

the impulse outward. The first proof is theoretical because it apprehends its object according to its nature; the second proof is practical because its attention is directed to the body of its object, or, in other words, to its active manifestation. As externalization, the body is essentially the practical direction of the soul, the deed of thought, as the soul is the thought of thought. In the light of speculative philosophy, soul and body are revealed as the moments of the spirit, neither of which is independent of the other. The soul, as internal, is the calm, in itself inactive centre; the body, as externalization of this internality, is activity. This insight confirms the validity of the former as the theoretical, and of the latter as the practical moment. The soul is the calm, contemplative ruling moment; the body the active, effective, serving moment. Neither is independent of the other, for creation, as the active corporeality of the Supreme Principle, itself participates in this principle.

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS.

ANALYSIS OF GOETHE'S "ELECTIVE AFFINITIES."

[We reprint the following remarkable article on Goethe's "Elective Affinities" from "The Index" of June 12, 1879.—Ed.]

The central idea of the "Elective Affinities" is the sanctity of the marriage relation. "What God or Fate hath joined together, let no man put asunder"—is the lesson to be learned in this most moral of moral tales. With a skilful hand Goethe has laid bare the inmost recesses of the human heart, held up to view its loves, its passions, and its weakness, and shown too its superhuman strength, its firmness, and its nobility. He brings before us a couple, happy in their relation to each other as husband and wife. No strong, passionate sentiment binds them together; their tastes are similar, their friendship sincere; and this friendship and similarity of tastes they mistake for conjugal love. Meanwhile Charlotte, the prudent, discreet wife, all unconsciously finds herself in love with and

beloved by her husband's friend, the Captain; and quite as unconsciously Edward, the impetuous husband, falls in love with and is loved by his wife's niece Ottilie. Under these circumstances it becomes a serious question whether the present legal condition of affairs ought not to give place to a higher law—whether the marriage ought not to be one of heart to heart and not a mere outward form.

Before the question is fairly decided a new obstacle presents itself—a child comes, having claims on the united love of father and mother. The mother, keen-sighted and rigidly loyal to duty, gladly accepts this solution of the problem as sufficient; but the father, blind to everything except his own impulsive wishes, recognizes this obstacle as really no obstacle. To be sure, he is the flesh and blood parent of his child, as is also Charlotte; but in his heart he had embraced Ottilie, and his wife in her heart had embraced the Captain. Edward declares such a union to be a moral adultery, and the offspring illegitimate in the highest sense.

Ottilie will take no decisive steps. Here is one of those deep, magnetic natures, passive rather than active—one whose mysterious attraction is wondrously felt, and yet never to be explained. With Edward we too find her irresistible. We cannot blame him for loving what is so lovely. He has great regard and respect for his wife, but Ottilie stirs the depths of his heart. With his wife his cup of happiness seemed full, but with Ottilie his cup ran over; and this excess was almost essential to the impulsive, intemperate Edward. The Captain is a staid, reasonable man, always with an eye to the eternal fitness of things; and if, in a moment of passion, he went so far as to kiss Charlotte's hand, he recovered himself immediately and begged her forgiveness. Throughout the story he is ready to act as propriety demands, and it is not strange that Charlotte, with her great love of order and her rare domestic accomplishments, should have an affinity for so proper a man as the Captain.

There is a spirit of fate brooding over this novel that reminds us of the fate in the old Greek dramas. Neither party dares to take active responsibility. Even Edward, who is precipitately active, is willing that fate should decide for him. He enters the army, is always in the foremost ranks, always rushes upon the enemy as if he knew Ottilie were beyond. He has continually in mind the thought of the glass bearing his initial and Ottilie's which did not break when it was tossed recklessly in the air, and he believes the same fate will be quite as careful over their united destinies, let him risk what dangers he may. Ottilie patiently waits her fate to be decided so soon as Charlotte and Edward shall have separated. Full of intense yearning and longing, of love which beareth all things and hopeth all things, every thought, every act, is for Edward.

In the plants, the trees, she sees only Edward's plants, Edward's trees. She tends the child because it is Edward's child. Love for Edward becomes her existence. As Ottilie represents love, Charlotte represents a wise, judicious understanding. Deliberately she weighs the *pros* and *cons*, leaving her own heart entirely out of the balance. She waits, hoping that time and the thought of his boy will cool Edward's passion; that employment and perhaps a new lover will divert Ottilie. As for the Captain, he can always wait for the fit time and place.

The fate which Edward trusted so implicitly does not desert him. Safe from the untold dangers of the war, he believes that fate has decided for him. He meets the Captain, tells him of his decision, overcomes the Captain's scruples as to public opinion, and, having arranged suitably for the maintenance of the Captain and Charlotte, starts the Captain for the execution of his plans. Here again fate steps in. Ottilie with the child had gone to the farther shore of the pond; the boy asleep on the grass, Ottilie sits beside him reading; Edward suddenly appears. With all her surprise and emotion, Ottilie will make no promise to Edward until she hears the result of the Captain's interview with Charlotte. Full of agitation, she leaves Edward, goes to the boat; but alas! in her confusion she loses her foothold just as she is stepping into the boat. The child falls into the water and is drowned.

Fate seems now to have answered the question. So Charlotte thinks, so the Captain, as well as Edward. Then it is that Ottilie with superhuman courage and fortitude declares that she will never marry Edward. Clearly she sees the sin in which she is entangled, and in the depths of her heart she will forgive herself only under condition of fullest renunciation. And Ottilie remains inflexibly firm in her purpose. With this state of affairs, nothing remains for her but death. Love is her existence; deny her that and she must die. The poet could not do otherwise than follow the course of Nature. To Edward life is nothing without Ottilie. Only death is desirable, for death alone restores Ottilie to him. A gracious fate grants his desire.

Such is the phase in which Goethe has viewed one of the most vital questions of the present time. He has chosen no random characters for his *dramatis personæ*. All who are needed to discuss or weigh the important subject are brought together. Cool, calm, deliberate reason we see in the person of Charlotte. Passion is represented by Edward. Ottilie is love, and the Captain public opinion. For, in discussing this question of the marriage relation, all of these have a voice in the matter. Passion is loud and demonstrative. It knows only its own desires. It will overthrow everything between itself and its object. Its own might

makes its right, and it acknowledges no law but its blind instincts. Reason too, as well as passion, has an interest in discussing this question. Nature has made the parents the guardians of the child, and reason doubts whether it may be right to leave the child to the protection of others, however suitable they may be; but, on the other hand, reason sees that where two are unequally yoked together there is discord which cannot have other than ill effects on the child. In this dilemma reason cannot decide, but appeals to a higher tribunal—to love; for love alone can solve the question—a love which is true to the highest and noblest, a love free from passion; and this love promptly decides upon self-renunciation. So when reason and passion and public opinion would err, love in the person of Ottilie reveals the highest truth. She decides all. She alone is capable of seeing the truth—feeling it, perhaps we should say; for it is the heart, not the head, which makes the decision.

Whoever calls this novel of Goethe's immoral and lax in its principles must needs be more spotless than sanctity itself. With rigid sacrifice and renunciation, Goethe demands not only the sacredness of the marriage relation in outward form, but also that its inmost spirit should be inviolate. He requires that marriage should be no mere friendship brought about by propinquity or a harmony of tastes; he demands that the highest love, the utmost fidelity, the closest union, should be the bonds of marriage. If marriage has been established on any other basis, he gives to the unfortunate pair no alternative but the strictest loyalty to each other. If diversion is to be found, it is in useful employment and not in the arms or caresses of another.

It has been said of Shakespeare's plays that each is an organic whole, that every subordinate part has its peculiar fitness and adaptation to the entire play, as the leaf, the twig, and the roots do to the tree. So of this novel of Goethe's. Not simply by its fruits, as seen in the *dénouement*, do we know it, but every minute part reveals the nature and character of the whole.

Almost at the outset the chemical affinities of metals and fluids become the subject of conversation. No better figure or illustration could be found to show the wonderful, secret workings of heart to heart and soul to soul than this affinity of matter for its own. Hence, magnetism and the mysteries of love play an important part throughout the book. The influence of Ottilie is magnetic. She attracts, not by her brilliant intellect or rare abilities, but by her magnetism; therefore it is those of the opposite sex who are drawn to her. The Superior, Luciana, and Charlotte know nothing of those hidden qualities of Ottilie's which attract the Assistant and the Architect as well as Edward. Edward on one occasion

thinks Otilie's conversation wonderful, and Charlotte coolly reminds him that Otilie had not said a word.

Not only does magnetic force play an important part in the book, but also that force which comes from human law and social organization. We find much said here in relation to order, harmony of arrangement, and taste. Landscape gardening is introduced, as also architecture; this, too, with no slight or indirect bearing on the whole. As the gardener, in subduing and compelling Nature to his own ends and purposes, must first consult her original tendencies, and govern all his plans by that; and as the architect cannot build according to his own wilfulness or caprice, but must subject himself to the eternal laws of beauty and order, so must man in his social relations look not merely to his own passions and desires, however lawful in and of themselves. He must conform to the social laws of Nature, must do no violence to the spirit of the times, but, on the contrary, come into a sacred harmony with it.

Like Shakespeare, Dante, and Homer, Goethe gives a portrait of his characters with a single stroke of the pen. Otilie's beautiful eyes, Charlotte's foot, Edward's deep, rich voice, are as significant as Homer's "white-armed Juno" or Shakespeare's "gentle Desdemona." It was absolutely essential that Otilie should have beautiful eyes. Reticent as she is, it was necessary that "the windows of the soul" should reveal the inner life. Love does not express itself in words. It has no voice. Passion is deep, intense, expressive. Hence, Edward's voice is deep and rich. Goethe was right in giving fate so active a part in this novel; for outside the human will, beyond human forethought, there seems at times a destiny, perverse or otherwise, that stands at the helm of affairs and gives direction, if not decision; and in no affairs does a destiny or blind fate seem to take more control than in matters of the heart.

Goethe is no cruel scientist dissecting human weakness merely to gratify his own or a public idle curiosity. He is a healing physician. Coolly and calmly he makes a diagnosis of the case, then prescribes, however severe, the needful remedy; and, as already hinted, the remedy in the case before us is useful activity. The old legend relating to the fall of man makes God pronounce labor as a curse upon the guilty pair. Goethe changes this curse into the greatest blessing, making it the healing balm for sin-sick souls. Thus renunciation, that sacrifice of self for the highest good of others, becomes that losing of life which shall find itself again; not a narrow, *individual* life, but a life which opens out into the broadest *personality*, a life which has become one with God.

MRS. C. K. SHERMAN.